

THE SKIPPING ROPE.

Never yet was antelope
Could skip so lightly by.
Stand off, or else my skipping-rope
Will hit you in the eye.
How lightly whirls the skipping-rope!
How fairy-like you fly!
Go, get you gone, you muse and mope—
I hate that silly sight!
Nav, dearest, teach me how to hope,
Or tell me how to die.
There, take it, take my skipping-rope,
And hang yourself therby!

[Tennyson's Poems.]

THE TIMES:

A LECTURE, BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

From The Dial.

[Continued]

These Reforms are our contemporaries; they are ourselves; our own light, and sight, and conscience; they only name the relation which subsists between us and the vicious institutions which they go to rectify. They are the simplest statements of Man in these matters; the plain Right and Wrong. I cannot choose but allow and honor them. So much for the Reform; but we cannot say as much for the Reformers. Beautiful is the impulse and the theory; the practice is less beautiful. The Reformers affirm the inward life, but they do not trust it, but use outward and vulgar means. They do not rely on precisely that strength which wins us to their cause; not of Love, nor of Principle, but on Men, on Maudities, on Circumstances, on Money, on Party; that is, on Fear, on Wrath, and Pride. The love which lifted men to the sight of these better ends, was the true and best distinction of this time, the disposition to trust a Principle more than a material Force. I think that the soul of Reform is the conviction that not Sensualism, not Slavery, not War, not Oppression, not even Government, is needed—but is born of them all, reliance on the sentiment of man, which will work best the core it is trusted; not reliance on numbers, but, contrariwise, distrust of numbers, and the feeling that they are strongest, when most private and alone. The young men, who have been private Society for these last years, with regenerative methods, seem to have made this mistake; they all exaggerated some special means, and all failed to see that the Reform of Reforms must be accomplished without means.

The Reforms have their high origin in an ideal justice, but they do not retain the purity of an idea. They are quickly organized in some low, inadequate form, and present no more poetic image to the mind, than the evil tradition which they reprobated. They mix the fire of the moral sentiment with personal and party heats, with measureless exaggerations, and the blindness that prefers some darling measure to justice and truth. Those who are urging with most ardor what are called the greatest benefits of mankind, are narrow, self-pleasing, conceited men, and affect us as the insane do. They bite us, and we run mad also. I think the work of the reformers innocent as other work that is done around him; but when I have seen it near, I do not like it better. It is done in the same way, it does profane, not plumb; by management, by tactics, by chicanery. It is a buzz in the ear. I cannot feel any pleasure in spectacles which display to me such partiality of character. We do not want actions, but men; not a chemical drop of water, but rain; the spirit that sheds and showers actions, countless, endless actions. You have on some occasion played a bold part. You have set your heart and face against Society, when you thought it wrong, and returned it from a frown. Excellent! now can you afford to forget it, reckoning all your action no more than the passing of your mouth? The world leaves no track in space, and the greatest action of man no mark in the vast idea. To the youth, diffident of his ability, and full of compunction at his unprofitable existence, the temptation is always great to lend himself to public movements, and as one of a party accomplish what he cannot hope to effect alone. But he must resist the degradation of a man to a measure. I must act with truth, though I should never come to act, as you call it, with effect. I must consent to inaction. A patience which is grand; a brave and cold neglect of the offices which prudence exacts, so it be done in a deep, upper piet; a consent to solitude and inaction, which proceeds out of an unwillingness to violate character, is the certainty which makes the gem. Whilst, therefore, I desire to express the respect the joy I feel before this sublime connexion of reforms, now in their infancy around us, I urge the more earnestly the paramount duties of self-reliance. I cannot find language of sufficient energy to convey my sense of the sacredness of private integrity. All men, all things, the State, the Church, yea, the friends of the heart are phantoms and unreal beside the sanctuary of the heart. With so much awe, with so much fear, let it be respected.

The great majority of men, unable to judge of any principle until its light falls on a fact, are not aware of the evil that is around them, until they see it in some gross form, as in a class of intemperate men, or slave-holders, or soldiers, or fraudulent persons. Then they are greatly moved; and magnifying the importance of that wrong, they fancy that if that fact were rectified, all would go well, and fill the land with clamor to correct it. Hence the Missionary and other religious efforts. If every island and every house had a Bible, if every child was brought into the Sunday School, would the wounds of the world heal, and man be upright.

But the man of ideas, accounting the circumstance nothing, judges of the entire state of facts from the one cardinal fact, namely, the state of his own mind. "If," he says, "I am selfish, then is there slavery, or the effort to establish it, wherever I go. But if I am just, then is there no slavery, let the laws say what they will. For if I treat all men as gods, how can there be such a thing as a slave?" But how frivolous is your war against circumstances! This denouncing philanthropist is himself a slave-holder in every word and look—Does he free me? Does he clear me? He is the State of Georgia, or Alabama, with their sanguinary slave-laws, walking here on our North-eastern shores. We are all thankful he has no more political power, as we are fond of liberty ourselves.—I am afraid our Virtue is a little geographical. I am not mortified by our Vice; that is obnoxious; it colors and pollutes, it curses and swears, and I can see to the end of it; but, I own, our Virtue makes me ashamed; so sour and narrow, so thin and blind, virtue so like vice. Then again, how trivial seem the contests of the abolitionist, whilst he aims merely at the circumference of the slave.—Give the slave the least elevation of religious sentiment, and he is no slave; you are the slave; he not only in his humility feels his superiority, feels that much-deplored condition of his to be a failing tribe, but he makes you feel it too. He is the master. The exaggeration, which our young people make of his wrongs, characterizes themselves.—What are no trifles to them, they naturally think no trifles to Pompey.

This, then, is our criticism on the reforming movement; that it is in its origin divine; in its management and details timid and profane. These benefactors hope to raise man by improving his circumstances; by combination of that which is dead, they hope to make something alive. In vain. By new infusions alone of the spirit by which he is made and directed, can he be remade and reinforced. The old Pestalozzi, who shared with all ardent spirits the hope of Europe on the outbreak of the French Revolution, after witnessing its sequel, recurred his conviction, that "the amelioration of outward circumstances will be the effect, but can never be the means of mental and moral improvement." Quitting now the class of actors, let us turn to see how it stands with the other class of which we spoke—namely, the Students.

A new disease has fallen on the life of man—Every like every human body, has its own disease. Other times have had war, or famine, or a barbarism domestic or bordering, as their antagonist. Our forefathers walked in the world and went to their graves, tormented with the fear of man, and the terror of the Day of Judgement.—

These terrors have lost their force, and our torment is Unbelief, the Uncertainty as to what we ought to do; the distrust of the value of what we do, and the distrust that the Necessity (which we all at last believe in) is fair and beneficial. Our Religion assumes the negative form of rejection. Out of love of the true, we repudiate the false; and the Religion is an abounding criticism. A great perplexity hangs like a cloud on the brow of all cultivated persons, a certain uneasiness in the best spirits, which distinguishes the period. We do not find the same trait in the Arabians, in the Hebrews, in Greek, Roman, Norman, English periods; nor in other men's natural firmness. The men did not see beyond the need of the hour. They planted their root strong, and doubted nothing. We contrast every step we take. We find it the worst thing about time, that we know not what to do with it. We are so sharp-sighted that we can neither work nor think, neither read Plato nor run him.

Then there is what is called a too intellectual tendency. Can there be too much intellect? We have never met with any such excess. But the criticism, which is leveled at the laws and manners, ends in thought, without causing a new method of life. The genius of the day does not incline to a dead, but to a holding. It is not that men do not wish to act; they pine to be employed, but are paralyzed by the uncertainty what they should do. The inadequacy of the work to the faculties, is the painful perception which keeps them still. This happens to the best. Then talents bring their usual temptations, and the current literature and poetry with perverse ingenuity draw us away from life to solitude and meditation. This could well be borne, if it were great and invincible; if the men were invincible by their thought, and hurried into ascetic extravagances. Society could then manage to release their shoulder from its wheel, and grant them for a time this privilege of Sabbath. But they are not so. Thinking which was a rage, is become an art. The thinker gives me results, and never invites me to be present with him at his invention of Truth, and to enjoy with him its proceeding into his mind.

So little action amidst such audacious and variegated profligacy, that we begin to doubt if that great revolution in the art of war, which has made it a game of posts and not a game of battles, has not operated on Reform; whether this be not also a war of posts, a paper blockade, in which each party is to display the utmost resources of his spirit and belief, and no conflict occur; but the world shall take that course, which the demonstration of the truth shall indicate.

But we must pay for being too intellectual, and they call it. People are not as light-hearted for it. I think men never loved life less. I question if care and doubt ever wrote their names so legibly on the faces of any population. This *Enfant*, for which we Saxons had no name, this word of France has got a terrible significance. It shortens life, and before the day of its light. Old age begins to the nursery, and before the young American has got into jacket and trowsers, he says, "I want something which I never saw before;" and I wish I was not I. I have seen the same gloom on the brow even of those adventurers from the intellectual class, who had dived deepest, and with most success into active life. I have seen the authentic signs of anxiety and perplexity on the greatest forehead of the State. The cunker-booms have crowded to the topmost bough of the wild elm, and swing down from that. Is there less oxygen in the atmosphere? What has checked in this age the animal spirits which gave to our forefathers their bounding pulse?

[Concluded tomorrow.]

TO LET.—The House and Stable on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 122nd street, with an acre of ground attached; till May next, \$1,000 per month. Apply at 209 Greenwich-st.

TO LET.—The Basement, No. 194 Broadway, a commodious room and good store for a boot-trunk, fruit-store, &c. Apply to John Lockwood, No. 27 Cedar-st.

TO LET.—The two-story Brick House, No. 36 Market-street, with the rear building, which is suitable for 8 stories. Apply to GRINNELL, MINTURN & CO., 72 South-st.

TO LET.—A handsome Dwelling, seven rooms, well arranged with pantries, cellar and good yards, inquire of Wm. H. PINKNEY, at 75 Bowery, corner of Fulton.

TO LET from the first day of NEXT May, three-fourths of the curtain story of the Franklin Building, corner of Ann and Nassau-streets, suitable for a printing office, or other mechanical business. Inquire of JAMES CONNER, in the building.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE.—A large cottage, well built, with a good garden, situated near Washington-square, to let to a family without children. The rent will be received in Bristol. Address H. L. of this office. Apply to J. W. LEVERIDGE, 145 Cherry-st. N. Y. 3224.

FOR SALE.—That very desirable plat of ground, situated in the town of Huntington, L. I., 5 miles from Brooklyn, 3 from Northport, Landing, 3 from Babylon Station Long Island Railroad. Buildings, walls, water, roads, fowling and fishing rights, etc. The soil is adapted to wheat, rye, corn, oats, cotton, tobacco, and fresh fruits. The above lands will be sold at reduced prices, and on terms to suit, of will be in exchange for almost any kind of merchandise. For further particulars inquire of J. & J. W. LEVERIDGE, 145 Cherry-st. N. Y. 3224.

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